

Feast of Saint Luke October 18, 2016 St. Agnes Church

St. Luke has a problem...several problems if truth be told.
In his community there are Jewish Christians who seek to apply overly strict requirements for those who want to become members.
[For example, they want Gentile men to be circumcised.]
In his community there are well-to-do Gentiles who are reluctant to share their possessions with the needy.
There is concern by community members as to what role women are to play.
There is the fact that some members only spoke Hebrew; others only spoke Greek.
Luke also has to explain to both Jewish and Gentile members how a faithful God can allow the city of Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed, how evil exists in the world even though God is all-powerful.
Finally, Luke has to convince members of his community to be true to their Christian mission especially as they face hostility, rejection and persecution.

The make-up of Luke's community, the coming together of different people from different cultures and backgrounds, is God's doing. By its very existence the community is fulfilling a mission. It is saying to the world "through Jesus Christ this is what God is doing. God's reign, God's kingdom, is a new era of peace and reconciliation. In this new era the wolf and the lamb lie down together."

Hence, all members of the community must be dedicated to and remain dedicated to the pursuit of peace. All community members are missionaries, not in the sense of standing before others, proclaiming the Good News, formally teaching others about Christ, but in the sense of seeking out the lost, seeking out sinners, and working to restore them to union with God.

It was not always a bed of roses or the life of Riley. Practical matters required attention. Concerns, problems, difficulties, divisions...had to be acknowledged and resolved. The first controversy to arise had to do with widows. Greeks complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The solution: the apostles officially appointed some reputable men, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to oversee this task. Apostolic approval was publicly affirmed by the laying on of hands. This table service evolves into the office of deacon.

What is most important to Luke as he seeks to collect and record the story of Jesus Christ is the faith of the apostles. The faith of the community is to be based on the faith of the apostles. The dynamics of community life and hence individual Christian life is grounded in apostolic witness and authority. Even today the ideal Christian life and ideal Christian community is apostolic... it remains rooted in and guided by the faith of the apostles and by the teachings of their appointed successors.

Luke wasn't an apostle but by his words recorded in Holy Scripture he provides for today's church apostolic foundations. When concerns, problems, difficulties, divisions arise in today's Christian community, when peace within is threatened or when mission focus and zeal become anemic, sound, faithful resolution, I believe, will always include the works of St. Luke the Evangelist.

"O Lord, fill your church with the Spirit that inspired St. Luke. May the wolf and the lamb be willing to lie down together giving witness to Your power to overcome our human fragmentation. Amen!"